

Capturing History From the Cal Poly College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental
Sciences Since 1950

A Senior Project

presented to

the Faculty of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Agricultural Science; e.g. Bachelor of Science

by

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Chapter 1

Background Information

Since California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) was established in 1901 (Cal Poly Quick Facts, 2012), agriculture has been an integral part of the campus. Cal Poly has been referred to as one of the best agriculture programs in the country and continues to produce leaders for the agricultural industry.

While the agriculture program at Cal Poly has always been a strong program, it does not appear that the remaining portion of the campus has always recognized this. The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) is second only to the College of Engineering in student enrollment (Cal Poly Quick Facts), but agriculture students do not seem to have a significant presence on the Cal Poly campus. Agriculture students are highly involved with campus-wide leadership, but the program itself should have a large presence, thanks in part to its long and rich history.

Statement of Problem

Since the agriculture program has the potential to be a strong leader on the Cal Poly campus, agriculture students need to be encouraged to continue the CAFES' longstanding tradition of leadership and success, both on campus and off.

The root of the problem lies in the fact that most students in the agriculture program are not familiar with the agriculture program's legacy. Walking through the Alan A. Erhart Agriculture Building and the Agricultural Sciences Building on the Cal Poly campus does little to remind current students of the agriculture program's past. Agriculture has been part of Cal Poly since its inception and therefore has a long history. If the students can be familiarized with the events and history from this specific time

period, they can be encouraged to continue the legacy of CAFES and increase the CAFES presence on campus.

Importance of the Research

If specific information on the past successes of CAFES is not provided for the students, they will not be able to fully understand how influential the Cal Poly agriculture program and its students truly was. By sharing specific articles from the *Mustang Daily* newspaper, summaries from past course catalogs and specific information from the El Rodeo yearbooks, it can be demonstrated that the agriculture program had the largest presence on campus than any other program.

Purpose of the Research

It is crucial to provide hard evidence of this history. The many stories that Cal Poly alumni and faculty have need to be recorded so the stories will not be lost. Nowhere on campus is there a comprehensive collection of the CAFES' history, only bits and pieces scattered around the campus. If more of the history can begin to be compiled and kept together, the risk of losing this history over time decreases. These records will help current and future students to recognize the legacy of the CAFES' and hopefully inspire them to carry on that legacy.

Objectives

This project has three main objectives:

1. Document the history of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences through transcripts and videos of interviews with Cal Poly alumni and past faculty and staff.

2. Share videos at the Cal Poly Open House April 14-15, 2012 in the Agricultural Pavilion at the Agricultural Education and Communication department booth.
3. Make historical findings available through the Cal Poly Library, the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication website and the Cal Poly Department of Agricultural Education and Communication.

Definition of Terms

- Associated Students, Incorporated: Abbreviated as ASI. This is the organization that serves as the student body representation of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Leadership consists of representatives from each program on campus based on enrollment, as well as higher up student leadership.
- College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences: Abbreviated as CAFES. This is Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo's agriculture program.
- Course Catalogs: During the 1960s, Cal Poly released a new course catalog for each school year. The course catalogs not only provided information on degrees and classes, but also included information about the campus facilities and each program and major and student body demographics. Consulting the course catalogs provide the reader with a summary of the agriculture program as well as a description of all the agriculture units associated with the campus during this time period.
- *El Mustang/Mustang Daily*: During the 1960s, the name of Cal Poly's student produced newspaper was changed from *El Mustang* to *Mustang Daily*. Reading articles and headlines from editions printed from 1960-1969 provides the reader with the many events the agriculture program put on

and participated in, the accolades received by the program and its students and a feel of the presence the agriculture program had on campus.

- El Rodeo: Until the 1990s, Cal Poly released a yearbook for students each year. The yearbook included a picture of all graduating seniors (majors and hometowns were also listed), a “Who’s Who of Cal Poly” section documenting campus leadership, pictures of departments and clubs, and a section dedicated to Poly Royal.
- Poly Royal: Poly Royal was started as an effort of the agriculture program to help students display their work and draw potential students to campus. The weekend quickly grew to become the largest event at Cal Poly, encompassing every aspect of the school. This event continued to focus largely on agriculture until its discontinuation in the 1990s.
- Open House: “Open House” replaced Poly Royal as the campus showcase after the discontinuation of Poly Royal. The weekend still contains the Poly Royal Rodeo, the Tractor Pull and a campus showcase.

Summary

Cal Poly students today are unfamiliar with the history of CAFES. It is crucial to begin educating the Cal Poly population on the importance of the agriculture program to the campus. By documenting the history from 1960-1969 the history can be preserved, the Cal Poly population can be educated and the agricultural presence on campus can be improved.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) has a rich history at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. CAFES' students have also been recognized for their leadership on campus and pride in their industry since the unit began.

CAFES has been growing upon this long and rich history since Cal Poly opened in 1901. The period of 1960-1969 was a time of great growth in the agriculture industry, and therefore a time of great growth for the CAFES. By reviewing El Rodeo yearbooks, course catalogs and *El Mustang/Mustang Daily* articles from this time period, a solid knowledge base of the history of CAFES can be formed which will help the researchers develop questions and topics to be discussed during interviews with former Cal Poly students and faculty.

Agricultural Majors from 1960-1970

In 1960, there were fourteen majors offered through the School of Agriculture at Cal Poly (Catalog issue 1960-1961, 1960). While some of these majors are the same or very similar to the majors the CAFES offers today, some are very different and reflect the state of the agriculture industry at the time. Today there is simply a crops science major, but in 1960 there were majors for field crops production, truck crops production and fruit science (Catalog issue 1960-1961, 1960). There was also a mechanized agriculture major which reflected the changes occurring in the agricultural industry at this time.

These majors, combined with the other majors offered, show that the 1960 School of Agriculture was on the cutting edge of agricultural trends and was dedicated to preparing its students to become leaders in the industry.

A list of the majors offered by the agriculture division follows.

1960-1961 Division of Agriculture (later called the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences) Majors (Catalog issue 1960-1961, 1960)

- Agricultural Business Management
- Agricultural Engineering
- Mechanized Agriculture
- Animal Husbandry
- Field Crops Production
- Truck Crops Production
- Fruit Production
- Dairy Husbandry
- Dairy Manufacturing
- Farm Management
- Food Processing
- Ornamental Horticulture
- Poultry Husbandry
- Soil Sciences

It is also important to note there were agricultural majors outside the agriculture division in the 1960s. The education department offered an agricultural education credential for students wanting to become agriculture teachers and the chemistry

department had an agriculture concentration (Catalog issue 1960-1961, 1960). However, after the 1963-1964 school year, the agriculture concentration within the physical science department was removed (Catalog Issue 1964-1965, 1964).

Until 1960, the Journalism Department only included curriculum in agricultural journalism. After 1960, the journalism department was renamed the technical journalism and expanded to offer concentrations in agriculture, home economics and business (Enstad, 1960, p.1).

From 1961 through 1964, there were no changes to the majors offered, with the exception of the combination of “field crops production” and “truck crops production” to “field and truck crops production” (Catalog issue 1962-1963, 1962). In 1964, the name was again shortened to “crop production” (Catalog issue 1964-1965, 1964).

Through the rest of the decade, no significant changes were made to the agricultural major offerings, other than slight changes in name or combination of similar majors. For example, “poultry husbandry” became “poultry industry” in 1965 (Catalog issue 1965-1966, 1965) and “dairy husbandry” and “dairy manufacturing” were combined into “dairy” in 1966 (Catalog issue 1966-1967, 1966). The 1960s closed with the addition of a natural resources management degree, marking the beginnings of a new era in agriculture (Catalog issue 1968-1969, 1968).

The majors offered by the agriculture division throughout the 1960s reflected the evolving state of the agriculture industry at the time. The agriculture division also offered more majors than any other divisions at Cal Poly. (Catalog issue 1960-1961, 1960; Catalog issue 1961-1962, 1961; Catalog issue 1962-1963, 1962; Catalog issue 1963-1964, 1963; Catalog issue 1964-1965, 1964; Catalog issue 1965-1966, 1965; Catalog

issue 1966-1967, 1966; Catalog issue 1967-1968, 1967; Catalog issue 1968-1969, 1968; Catalog issue 1969-1970, 1969.) The variety of majors offered shows Cal Poly's dedication to producing agricultural leaders for both the industry and the campus. Today, CAFES continues to offer majors that prepare students to succeed in the modern agriculture industry.

Agricultural Clubs from 1960-1970

During the 1960s, the CAFES not only had more majors than any other division, but also had more clubs than any other division on campus. There was at least one club for every major within the division, as well as several interdisciplinary clubs. Examples include the Agricultural Education Club and the Cutting and Reining Club (Carpentar, 1959; Anderson, 1960; Miller, 1961; McNeil, 1962; Seymour, 1963; Cochran, 1964; Smith, 1965; Gillette, 1966; Siefken, 1967; Reynolds, 1968; Vincent, 1969; Donaldson, 1970).

Following is a list of all clubs that appeared in the Agriculture Division during the 1960s (Carpentar, 1959; Anderson, 1960; Miller, 1961; McNeil, 1962; Seymour, 1963; Cochran, 1964; Smith, 1965; Gillette, 1966; Siefken, 1967; Reynolds, 1968; Vincent, 1969; Donaldson, 1970):

- Agricultural Business Club
- Alpha Zeta
- Boots and Spurs
- Cal Poly 4-H Club
- Cal Poly Farm Center/Cal Poly Campus Farm Bureau Center
- Crops Club

- Dairy Cattle Judging Team
- Dairy Products Judging Team
- Farm Management
- FFA/Agriculture Education Club
- Food Processing Club
- Horseshoeing Club
- Livestock Judging Team
- Los Lecheros
- Ornamental Horticulture
- Poultry Club
- Rodeo Club
- Rodeo Team
- Society of Agricultural Engineers
- Soil Conservation Society of America
- Soils Club
- Woolgrowers
- Young Farmers

The agriculture division was the first division to develop a college council to represent all agricultural clubs on campus in student government (Anderson, 1960). The Agricultural Council's effort to unite all aspects of the agricultural division and work to have its voice heard on a college-wide basis long before any other division represents the leadership role and initiative agricultural students had on campus during this time.

Today, the CAFES has thirty-five clubs specifically associated with the college (Catalog Issue 2011, 2011). There were only twenty-three clubs during the 1960s, but the college also had less students and different majors than today. The number of clubs in the agricultural division shows how involved students were and that these students were focused on more than simply succeeding in the classroom.

Poly Royal and the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences from 1960-1970

The first Poly Royal was held on March 20, 1933. The event was organized to help students show off the projects they had completed during the year. The Animal Husbandry Department had particularly pushed for such an event, as it would offer its students a chance to show their livestock projects prior to the Tri-State Junior Livestock Show. Poly Royal was originally comprised of a livestock judging contest, stock horse contest and rodeo, exhibits from the different agricultural departments and a queen contest, all culminating with a coronation ball (McNeil, 1962).

On Friday, April 29, 1960, the *El Mustang* printed a special, “Poly Royal Today and Tomorrow” edition of the newspaper. The issue included a schedule of events, as well as stories of Cal Poly’s achievements during the year. The majority of these headlines highlighted the agriculture division. Example headlines include: “Poly Holstein Herd Rated Among Best in Nation,” “College Cowboys Bring Fame to Campus Arena” and “Trained Chicks Ride Merry-go-Round” (Read, 1960).

From 1933-1936, Poly Royal was specifically an event of the agriculture division, with the event expanding to the entire school in 1937. At this time, ten percent

of the student fees went to funding Poly Royal and the student council had a special Poly Royal board dedicated solely to organize the event (McNeil, 1962).

Even after the entire campus became involved in Poly Royal, the goal of the event was to create a “county fair on a college campus,” meaning that agriculture was still the main focus (Seymour, 1963). Rodeos, livestock shows, barbecues and tours of the agricultural units were the headliner events that attracted people to visit the Cal Poly campus and learn more about the school. This focus on CAFES continued until the end of Poly Royal in 1991.

The Cal Poly Open House today is not on the same scale as Poly Royal once was. However, CAFES is still the division that is very active in the event and provides the headlining attractions, such as the rodeo, tractor pull, Agriculture Pavilion and taste tests of CAFES food products.

The Cal Poly Campus View of the College of Agriculture Food and Environmental Sciences from 1960-1970

In modern times the CAFES gained recognition for more negative events, such as the 2008 Crops House Incident and the 2011 Egg Nog recall. If one were to leaf through a recent edition of *Mustang Daily*, you would not find multiple headlines about the Cal Poly dairy herd or rodeo team, even though the CAFES is the second largest college on campus. Rather, one would be more likely to find a story reprimanding or criticizing CAFES.

This was not the case in the 1960s. By reading through course catalogs, yearbooks and copies of the campus newspaper, it is apparent that the agriculture division was a source of pride for the entire school. The agriculture division is referred to as

“outstanding” in the description of the entire school in one catalog and no other division earned such a strong adjective (Catalog issue 1969-1970, 1969). In all the course catalogs from 1960-1969, the description of the agricultural division highlights the excellence of every single aspect of the division and the many opportunities available to its students.

At the beginning of the decade, agriculture also received the most recognition in the yearbooks. Not only was every club featured, therefore giving the agriculture division more coverage than any other division, Poly Royal was heavily featured as well, which of course meant more coverage of agriculture students.

As the 1960s wore on, the yearbook club features stopped highlighting every single club and Poly Royal began receiving less coverage. In 1969, Poly Royal received only four pages of coverage and the agriculture division received only nine pages. In 1966, Poly Royal alone received ten pages of coverage (Yearbook 1966, 1969).

The *El Mustang/Mustang Daily* newspaper was also a great place to learn about the CAFES during the 1960s. It is true that at the beginning of the decade the newspaper was run by agricultural journalism students. Because of this, one could therefore argue bias, but by 1961 the agricultural journalism department had expanded to include students from other journalistic concentrations (Enstad, 1960, p.1). Even after students from other backgrounds began contributing to the newspaper, coverage of the agriculture division remained prominent.

Leafing through randomly selected editions of newspapers from this era, one can find at least five stories highlighting the agricultural division per issue and at least one of those stories would be on the front page. This was more than any other college was

featured (the majority of other stories were about speakers coming to campus, athletics and student life in general).

Headlines from this time included “Milk Way through School with Educated Cow Plan” (Bravos, 1967, p.1), “Students to manage Sheep Beginning Spring Quarter” (Nicklaus, 1969, p.7) and “Poly picnic and bar-b-que grounds, built by Agriculture Council and Agriculture club members” (Read, 1960, p.1). These headlines were not highlighting a specific achievement of the agriculture division, but simply everyday activities and programs of the division. If the division won a specific award, there would typically have been a longer feature describing the achievement. If the CAFES were to receive coverage through a campus wide news outlet today outside of the agriculture department, it would not be for the everyday activities and jobs of its students.

During the 1960s, the Cal Poly campus as whole was interested in what was occurring in the agricultural division. From winning livestock judging contests to announcing that students would be providing all the labor at the sheep unit, the entire college viewed it as interesting news.

Agricultural Leadership at Cal Poly from 1960-1970

From the beginnings of Cal Poly, agriculture students have been in leadership roles, a tradition that continues today. In 1966, agricultural business management student, George Soares, was student body president (Gillette, 1966). There were also a number of agricultural students involved in Agriculture Council (the only college council of clubs (Carpentier, 1959; Anderson, 1960; Miller, 1961; McNeil, 1962; Seymour, 1963; Cochran, 1964; Smith, 1965; Gillette, 1966; Siefken, 1967; Reynolds, 1968; Vincent, 1969; Donaldson, 1970)) and the student government Poly Royal planning board. Since

the agriculture division had more clubs than any other division, this meant more students were involved in leadership at the club level in the agriculture division than in any other division on campus.

Each year the yearbook highlighted outstanding seniors through the “Outstanding Seniors” and later the “Who’s Who of American Colleges” section. Students were chosen for this honor based on scholastic achievement and leadership involvement (Smith, 1965). For each year, there were agriculture students highlighted and in some cases more agriculture students than any other type of students. This illustrates that agriculture students were leaders both in and out of the classroom.

Conclusion

During the 1960s, the agricultural division was the face of Cal Poly. The division housed the majority of students at Cal Poly, provided the most leadership for the campus, was the main topic of news for the school and allowed for the school’s largest event, Poly Royal. The agriculture division helped Cal Poly to make a name for itself and produced many leaders that helped to shape the modern agriculture industry.

Chapter 3

Methods and Materials

Methods

September 2011: Author enrolled in AGED 460 and began process of choosing senior project topic. After talking with Megan Silcott, current Director of the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication, the author saw a need to document the history of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

October 2011: The author conducted a literature review at the Cal Poly University Archives, located in the Robert E. Kennedy Library, where past Cal Poly yearbooks (El Rodeo) and newspapers (*El Mustang* and, later, *Mustang Daily*) were researched to help develop a base knowledge of the history of CAFES to assist in developing interview agendas that would help gather more information. Past Cal Poly course catalogs were also reviewed in the Cal Poly Digital Commons to help the author become more familiar with the academic offerings of the CAFES. The author conducted approximately 30 hours of research. The research and findings were then compiled into chapter two of the author's senior project.

November 2011: The author wrote chapter one of the senior project. Using information from chapter two, the author was able to define three concise objectives to guide the remainder of the project.

December 2011: The author met with senior project adviser, Megan Silcott, to discuss how to carry out the remainder of the project and procure interviews with retired Cal Poly staff and Cal Poly alumni. Mrs. Silcott shared that her agricultural communications Special Problems class for winter quarter 2012 would be assisting the author in collecting interviews and utilizing the information gathered.

January 7, 2012: The author again met with senior project adviser, Megan Silcott, and members of Mrs. Silcott's Special Problems group to learn to operate the video camera

and to develop the interview contact list. The list was then divided among the author and the special problems class. It was decided that as many interviews as possible needed to be completed by March 16, 2012. The author was given Richard Johnson, Lark Carter, Robert Cummings and Joseph Sabol to contact and interview.

January 10, 2012: The author continued to develop the interview contact list and began preparing interview questions.

January 11, 2012: The author reached out to Joseph Sabol to set up an interview via Facebook. The author also set up an interview with Robert Cummings for January 30, 2012 at 1:00 pm in Mr. Cummings' office on the Cal Poly campus.

January 18, 2012: The author set up interviews with Lark Carter (January 28, 2012 at 10:00 am at Dr. Carter's home) and with Richard Johnson (January 27, 2012 at 12:00 pm at Mr. Johnson's home). The author called and left a voicemail for Joseph Sabol to try again to set up an interview.

January 26, 2012: The author confirmed the upcoming interview with Mr. Johnson, Dr. Carter and Mr. Cummings.

January 27, 2012: The author and Megan Silcott interviewed Mr. Richard Johnson for approximately one hour at his home in San Luis Obispo. After the interview, the author uploaded a video recording and tape recording of the interview to a computer in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication and the author's computer.

January 28, 2012: The author and Megan Silcott interviewed Dr. Lark Carter at his home in San Luis Obispo for approximately one and a half hours. After the interview, the author uploaded the video and tape recordings of the interview to a computer in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication and the author's computer. The author

also typed notes for the interviews with Mr. Johnson and Dr. Carter on the author's computer to assist with the analysis of the interviews later on.

January 30, 2012: The author interviewed Mr. Robert Cummings in the Alan Erhart Agriculture Building on the Cal Poly campus for approximately one hour. After the interview, the author uploaded the tape recording of the interview to a computer in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication and the author's computer (Mr. Cummings asked not to be video recorded). The author also typed notes from this interview to help with analysis later.

February 10, 2012: The author attempted to use free voice transcription software in order to transcribe interviews. It quickly became apparent that the voice transcription software was not a good option, as the software was not advanced enough to accurately transcribe the interview.

February 12, 2012: The author spoke with senior project advisor, Megan Silcott, about the issues with transcribing the interview. It was decided that only the passages the author planned to discuss in the senior project would need to be transcribed. All interview tape recorders would be burned to a compact disc and all video recordings from the interviews would be burned to a DVD.

February 22, 2012: The author set up an interview with Dr. Joseph Sabol for March 2, 2012 for 3:00 pm at Dr. Sabol's house.

March 2, 2012: The author and Megan Silcott interviewed Dr. Joseph Sabol at his home for approximately two hours.

March 3, 2012: The author transcribed passages from the interviews with Mr. Johnson, Dr. Carter and Mr. Cummings that will be analyzed later in the senior project. The author

also updated chapter one and two of the senior project to reflect the evolution of the project and began authoring chapter three. The author also typed the notes from the interview with Dr. Sabol to help later on in the project.

March 4, 2012: The author wrote thank you notes to Mr. Johnson, Dr. Carter, Mr. Cummings and Dr. Sabol to thank them for their assistance in the interviews. The tape and video recording from the Dr. Sabol interview were uploaded to a computer in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication and the author's computer.

March 7, 2012: The author continued work on chapter three of this senior project.

March 9, 2012: The author spoke with Sam Doty about putting together a video made of interview clips, based on Learn by Doing discussions from those interviews, to be shown during Open House.

March 14, 2012: The author turned in chapters one, two and three of this senior project by adviser, Dr. Scott Vernon.

April 1, 2012: The author transcribed passages from the interview with Dr. Joseph Sabol and updated chapter three of this senior project.

April 28, 2012: The author wrote chapters four (results) and five (conclusion and recommendations) of this report. The author also burned the video recordings of the interviews to a DVD and voice recordings of the interviews to a CD to be kept in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication.

Materials

Flip Video Camera: For this project, it was necessary to record all interviews on video in order to present interview clips to audiences at the Cal Poly Open House. The author

recognized the fact that a higher grade camera would give better quality video in the end, however, the researchers felt that using a smaller, unobtrusive recording method, such as a Flip Camera, allowed our interviewees to remain comfortable and concentrate on the task at hand, instead of being concerned with a large video camera. Because subjects were more at ease, the author felt they got quality answers to the questions asked.

Voice recorder with USB attachment: Being able to transcribe important parts of the interviews is crucial to this research project. A voice recorder that can upload directly to a computer allows the researchers to transcribe interviews at their own pace. Having the files on the computer can also allow researchers to utilize voice transcription software if they choose.

iMovie: This program is the most user friendly of movie-making software and still yields quality results. If the researchers are familiar with other movie-making software, they are encouraged to use that program. iMovie will allow the author to easily make several different videos containing interview combinations appropriate for the intended audience.

A basic knowledge of the history of the CAFES: Being familiar with the history of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences allows the researcher to ask the interviewees appropriate questions that will lead to the information needed. If the researcher has not researched the history adequately, interviews cannot be productive.

Compact Discs: Compact discs for the voice recordings are necessary to record digital copies of the interviews for other people to utilize. These will be kept in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication.

DVDs: DVDs for the video recordings are necessary to record digital copies of the interviews for other people to utilize. These will be kept in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication.

Alumni and Retired Faculty Contacts: Obtaining interviews with retired Cal Poly faculty and Cal Poly alumni would have been impossible if the researcher had not obtained a list of such people who still lived in the San Luis Obispo area.

Two computers to upload video and tape recorders to: It is critical to have this information in multiple locations in case one computer or hard drive should fail so the author will always have the necessary information.

Thank you notes: Thanking the interviewees and anyone who assists the author throughout the project will help to ensure further assistance if needed.

Chapter 4

Results

The objectives of this senior project were to capture history from the Cal Poly College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) and record this

information in order to ensure that these memories are not forgotten with time. Through interviews with four men with heavy associations to Cal Poly, the author was able to collect and record information about CAFES and make this information available to the public.

The interview with Richard “Dick” Johnson provided the author with information about CAFES from 1950 to 1987, specifically history from the Animal Husbandry/Science Department. Speaking with Mr. Johnson was a great privilege as he is considered one of the best educators Cal Poly has ever had. Mr. Johnson shared stories about CAFES and how he saw the school evolve over the 37 years he taught at Cal Poly. The history gathered from Mr. Johnson provides a great overview of the early days of Cal Poly and CAFES and insight into the changes Cal Poly has experienced over the years.

Dr. Lark Carter was able to share information about CAFES from the 1980s to the 1990s. His experiences were from an administrative standpoint, as Dr. Carter served as the Dean of CAFES during his entire time with Cal Poly. While Dean, Dr. Carter oversaw the completion of the Agricultural Sciences Building (also known as Building 11), the completion of EARTH University in Costa Rica and countless other achievements made by CAFES during this time. Dr. Carter’s interview shared more recent history from CAFES.

Mr. Robert Cummings (Mr. Bob) was an unique interview as Mr. Bob was a student in CAFES during the 1950s and 1960s and eventually came back to Cal Poly as a lecturer in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, where he currently works. Having a student perspective helped to round out the information collected throughout all the interviews and allowed stories to be recorded that wouldn’t

have been otherwise. Mr. Bob was also able to share information about Mr. Richard Johnson, as Mr. Johnson was one of Mr. Bob's teachers.

The interview with Dr. Joseph Sabol was by far the longest and most diverse interview the author conducted. Dr. Sabol was a professor in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department for thirty years (1972-2002), and served as an interim associate dean for a year. Dr. Sabol worked with many people on many different projects throughout his time at Cal Poly and, because of this, had many different stories to share with the author.

To ensure that all information shared was captured, the author both tape recorded and video recorded all interviews. The author also transcribed important passages from these interviews, which can be found in Appendix A of this report. The video and voice recordings have been digitally recorded onto DVDs and CDs, which can be found in the Brock Center for Agricultural Communication. Having these recordings available to the public helps to not only achieve the objectives of this project, but helps to ensure that the history of CAFES will not be forgotten.

The objectives of this report state that a video would be played during the Cal Poly Open House Weekend at the Agricultural Education and Communication Department booth. A video was not ready in time for the Open House Weekend, though the raw video footage of the interviews has been shared with a student who will prepare a series of videos, to be shared at future CAFES events.

Summary

While a video was not shared at the Cal Poly Open House Weekend, the other objectives of this report were met, making this project a success. History and memories

from Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences were recorded and will now not be forgotten.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The video and voice recordings of the interviews with Mr. Richard Johnson, Dr. Lark Carter, Mr. Robert Cummings and Dr. Joseph Sabol are available in the Brock

Center for Agricultural Communication. These interviews share information about the history of Cal Poly's College of Agriculture Food and Environmental Sciences from 1950 to the present.

Recommendations

The author recommends that the work started with this report be continued and treated as an ongoing project. The amount of information regarding CAFES, its history and its many projects and achievements over the years is seemingly endless, and this information needs to be captured and recorded for future generations. This information can also serve as a reminder for current CAFES students of the long history of their program and that they are a part of history.

Appendix A

(Interview Segment Transcriptions)

Interview with Richard “Dick” Johnson

Following are passages from an interview with Richard “Dick” Johnson, retired Animal Husbandry professor at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, that provide specific information about the history of Cal Poly. The interview took place on January 27, 2012 at the home of Mr. Johnson. The interview was both tape-recorded and video taped. Digital versions of both are available.

0:00-0:09

Dick Johnson (DJ): All male institution. We didn’t go coeducational until 1956.

0:43-0:52

DJ: Of course, the president here was a great FFA man, McPhee [Julian McPhee].

Carrie Isaacson (CI): He was? Okay.

2:05

DJ: “But I had some excellent women on the judging team over the years.”

3:00-4:33

CI: “Over those 37 [1950-1987] years you were at Cal Poly, how did you see the students change, other than just girls showing up?”

DJ: “Well, the old-timers kind of faded away, you know, the war generation, and they were replaced by high school kids, and that was a little different.”

Megan Silcott (MS): “Younger group.”

DJ: “Younger group, yep. And, they were just, pretty much FFA background, so they were good, solid students, but not quite as dedicated as the guys there trying to get back to work. And you could see a difference in the character, by the time they were seniors, they were just as good as the older generation.”

MS: “How about the College? Did the College change much? New majors, or what changes did you see?”

DJ: “Yes, there were probably changes in the College to some extent, I wasn’t always aware of them. The College of Agriculture at the time was probably the largest college of the group and as a consequence we probably got the lion’s share of the change because Julian McPhee was very much an agriculturalist in his mind. I don’t want to say that as a condemnation of him. I was happy to see the School of Math and Science getting that new building.”

MS: “Yes, isn’t that amazing?”

CI: “It’s going to be beautiful.”

DJ: “They really deserve that, they’re Dean.”

8:37-10:09

CI: “Do you remember when the Alan Erhart agriculture building was built?”

DJ: “I wish I did. I know what you mean. We moved into it. We were in an old building that has been tore down. It was the old Ag Education building on campus, old Spanish style two story building. That was demolished and they moved us into the new Science building. We called it the Spider building, do you remember that? We had offices there, much to the dismay of some of the science people because, ‘who said you guys could move in here?’ ‘And I said, I don’t know, but we’re moving in.’ Turns out Shepherd [Dean of the College of Agriculture] had arranged for a suite of offices there. Then, just as soon as the Erhart Ag building was finished, we moved in to it. We were in the Science building a couple of years at least, I think.”

CI: “Now did Erhart donate the money, or was he being honored?”

DJ: “I think he was being honored. I don’t think he donated, it was a state construction. But he was being honored for having been a very stout supporter of Cal Poly. There was

a time when they were going to do away with Cal Poly, maybe you've heard that story too."

10:27-11:45

CI: "I had no idea that Julian McPhee was such a supporter of ag."

DJ: "He was an FFA man through and through. Now I understand this new President is the same way."

CI: "Yes, he sits on the United Egg Board and was a professor of animal science at Michigan and was a Kentucky state FFA officer."

DJ: "I'll tell you a little story about that. I used to love to go to lunch at the staff dining room on campus and sit down with friends in the science department or math or, just kinda see how they feel cause agriculture was always kinda looked upon as a [undecipherable] in Julian's eyes. Well, when it came time to get a new President after Bob Kennedy resigned, well I uh, the same thing they said to me at the table was 'Dick Johnson, we don't want again as President at this institutions is a retreacked ag teacher.' I said, 'don't worry, you're never going to get another ag teacher as president at this university. I could have fallen off my horse if I had been on one when they told me that this man [Armstrong] got the presidency and he was an animal husbandry professor at Michigan State!"

12:49-14:13

CI: "Going back to that new meat's facility and how it's supposed to really help current students, has Learn by Doing always been such a big part of Cal Poly?"

DJ: "Oh very, more so then than it was then. We don't begin to have the meat animal projects that we did then, and I don't know why. But we used to feed out cows and cattle and carloads of lambs and hogs. A thousand head of hogs went to market from here over

the years. And those were all set up so the students got one third, no two-thirds, no, I'm sorry, the other way around. Two-thirds went back to the foundation because they served as our banker and the students got the other third, the income. And if there was no income, the students got the experience.

CI: "What does Learn by Doing mean to you? Do you think it is a way more valuable for students to have experiences like that?"

DJ: "I think so, very much so. In all the departments, not just specifically ag, it's working well for all the departments as well. There's no question that Learn by Doing is the best way to learn, if you have the facilities to allow you to do so."

44:45-47:00

CI: "What advice would you give to current agriculture students today at Cal Poly?"

DJ: "Well, lets see. It's kinda hard. So many students come here with the idea that they want to be a big rancher and that isn't in the picture anymore, unless the ranch is already in the family. Leila Hunter, this woman who was one of my top livestock judges, operates a big ranch over in Nevada, but she acquired it from her grandfather and none of the grandsons seemed to be interested in it so Leila got it, and she's done a wonderful job with that."

MS: "Do you think today's students should focus on something that maybe our generation is missing?"

DJ: "Well, I really can't judge the current generation because I've been retired quite a while, but I was really quiet impressed with the students when I retired. Of course, I was very impressed with the students who returned from war, they were older you see. I thought it would drop off with the younger generations but the younger generations were

just as sincere in their efforts and I couldn't see much of a drop off. I could see a little more playful attitude, maybe, in the younger generations, but other than that, they new what they were doing. If they didn't they got into something else."

51:41-52:20

MS: "Is there anything else you'd like to share?"

DJ: "Well, I think something I'd like to share is the good attitude of the Boots 'n Spurs club. They always had a nice banquet and they'd recognize outstanding students and recognize the judging team and I think that was one of the nicest parts of the Animal Science department. Both me men and women in all the years I was there."

Interview with Dr. Lark Carter

Following are passages from an interview with Dr. Lark Carter, former Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, that share specific information about the history of Cal Poly. The interview took place on January 28, 2012 at the home of Dr. Carter. The interview was both tape-recorded and video taped. Digital versions of both are available.

Carrie Isaacson (CI): When did you come to Cal Poly?

Lark Carter (LC): I came in Fall of 1981. President Baker had come; I was working in Washington DC at the Department of Agriculture at the time, heading up the higher education programs office and he came out in June and interviewed me. Shortly after that I was invited to come to an interview here and that Fall I arrived I think in October 1981.

CI: And what were you hired to do?

LC: I was the Dean of Agriculture.

CI: You were the Dean of Agriculture.

LC: It was called the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources back then, and the

name of the College has changed a couple times to its present name.

CI: About how many times has it changed, you think?

LC: Twice.

CI: Twice?

LC: Since then.

CI: Okay.

LC: For a while it was just the School of Agriculture and then College of Agriculture which is one of things I had pushed for us to get the title of all of the schools to be changed to college, which did occur. Not a big deal.

CI: It sounds nicer.

LC: It more appropriately describes what we have.

CI: Exactly. When did you leave Cal Poly?

LC: I retired in 94, in 1994, and the last two and half years I was on loan to the State Department in Washington DC in the office of higher education. And, no that was my first time in Washington, D.C. just before coming here was the Office of Higher Education, USDA. In '92 I went to the State Department Agency for International Development and worked was US colleges agriculture and other colleges, not just agriculture in linking the United States universities with developing country universities. That kind of work.

CI: And were you Dean the entire time you were at Cal Poly?

LC: I was Dean that approximately that ten year period of 81 to 91.

CI: Okay. What was your impression of the College of Agriculture students when you first got here?

LC: Well, it was already known as a premier agricultural college when I got here, so I was striving to maintain that and strengthen it as time went on. And I think we did.

Megan Silcott (MS): I would say so.

CI: Yes, and when he left what were your feelings on where the College of Ag may be going?

LC: Well, I think it was pretty clear the college would continue to function effectively and continue to be in premier College of agriculture. We've gone through a lot of budget crises in my career. It seemed like about every 10 years it would be a huge budget crisis wherever I was. Went to Montana state University in 1960 and almost immediately there was a huge cutback of 33% on the university budget so...

MS: Oh, even then?

LC: And then they had more budget crises while I was there and then I got here in '81 and almost immediately the president informed me that I had been quite a significant reduction in the amount of money available to the college of agriculture. And then in 1990, 89, 90, 91, another big prices and, then, about 10 more years and here we are.

CI: Yes, exactly. How do you think that we've managed to stay such a strong, even with the constant cuts?

LC: Well, I think McPhee set up an educational philosophy, on learn by doing, which was pooh-poohed by many other colleges for many years, but I think you have probably observed that many of the colleges now have adopted a similar model, though they may not call it learn by doing, a similar philosophy of education, because it has been a very effective way of preparing students for life, both professionally and in their personal lives.

CI: Yes. I know that Davis animal science students don't get to start playing with mice until their junior year, so, there is a difference between us. But, what was your overall relationship, between the College of Ag and the university, kind of fostering that connection?

LC: Well, there's a Dean's Council, or at least there was, I think they have something similar now. You worked with the other Deans, and my boss was, at that time vice president for academic affairs, which is now the provost, very similar assignments. The duties of various functions of these offices have changed over the years, which you would expect, it changed over the ten years, which you expect has part of university life.

CI: And what was the other Deans' impression of what the College of Ag was all about?

LC: There was a natural, what do you call it, natural desire on the part of all the Deans to make their college as good as they can and to gain as many of the resources that are available for their college and at the same time, you want to function cooperatively with the other colleges because part of your success is on their success. You can't, you can't do it alone. You have to work together as a unit, but there is some competitiveness, it's just natural. Even within a college there's some competitiveness among the departments to get the resources that are available and so forth. It's kind of a natural thing that occurs for administrators and for the professors for that matter.

CI: Would you say that the College as a whole had a positive presence on campus? Or, I feel today that we're not always thought of as the best...

LC: I think we've always had to kind of fight for our place. That has been true throughout my whole career. It was true throughout my time at Montana State University also. But I think there was a high regard for the college agriculture or college of agriculture and

natural resources, the current title you know. We have to assert ourselves and not become obnoxious but let it be known that we have a good program and we are confident we are doing a good job.

CI: Were you able to spend a lot of time with students?

LC: Never as much as I would have liked. It was, when you have a 3700, 3800 students the top administration people, the Dean, the associate dean, have a limited amount of contact with individual students. You have contact the student leaders, especially some of the students who are achieving at a very high level and you also have contact with some of the students who are not doing so well, and then the vast majority of the students of you only get to casually and you never get to know that many really well, you just do the best you can and you try to hire people who will have that contact students, that more intimate contact with the students, that allows for them to excel after they graduated.

CI: Did you ever teach any classes while you were Dean?

LC: I did at Montana State University. When I started I was teaching three classes and half-time as an assistant dean, and that kept me pretty busy. When I came here, the Dean's job was so demanding, a lot of travel, being gone, didn't allow for me to take classes completely, but I did give guest lectures frequently through the years.

CI: I just, our class planning website came on live last night and I saw that Dean Wehner is teaching one of the classes I'm taking...

MS: Is it 452?

CI: Yes, so that was kinda surprising to me, I didn't remember him teaching any classes.

MS: I had him for that.

CI: Shelton was teaching it until recently, but, so that is why I asked that question. Are

there any students that you were able to work with that really stuck out in your mind?

LC: Oh yes. One of my students back at Montana State University I just went to visit. He's retired now, has written two books, went on to get his PhD in range management and became quite a famous range landist in the plain states. And, then here, oh, one of them early on was Tim Assleman, and I still hear from him every year at Christmas time, or there after, and he was president of the AG student council, just quite an outstanding young man. And, uh, there's so many, I don't know quite know where to stop.

CI: During your ten years here as the dean, how did you see the college evolve or change?

LC: Well, we did, excuse me. [LC took phone call] That was my daughter.

CI: How big is your family?

LC: Two daughters. One here and one in Yuba City.

CI: Oh, I'm from near Yuba City.

LC: You are?

CI: From Woodland.

LC: Yes, yes.

CI: Did they go to school here at Cal Poly?

LC: No, they were growing up in Montana. And both of them did take classes at Montana State University. This one actually graduated from Western Michigan University. My daughter Nancy, and that was quite a few years back.

CI: Did your girls do 4-H or FFA or anything?

LC: They were involved in other school activities, but not in the FFA.

CI: Going back to the department, do you think it grew to be stronger or do you think we

are maybe losing focus?

LC: Well, I think we continued to maintain a strong college of agriculture during that period of time. There was some redistribution of resources within the college that last year or two, because of the budget crisis. But the enrollment has continued, even though there have been changes in the composition of the college, the enrollment has been maintained at approximately the same level as when I was here during that ten year period. We had about 3,700 then too. I think we are still about in that range.

CI: You mentioned traveling a lot. What were some of your more memorable trips?

LC: Shortly after I got here, I represented the United States at a conference in Paris, and that was kind of an interesting...the organization of, what do they call it, the OECD, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, which is some of the larger nations and they have many things, but this conference was on higher education in agriculture, and I gave a paper there.

MS: What made the trip memorable?

LC: Oh, just the association with the people, and it was in February, so experiencing Paris and France in February was an education because it was bitterly cold and the wind was blowing and even when I was in Montana, I was not as uncomfortable as I was in Paris. Considerably warmer climate in general. But the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development is still functioning, as far as I know, have many duties, not particularly agriculture. Economics and the policy, economic policies of the large countries that are members of that organization.

[LC got a glass of water and we took a break, topic of Joe Sabol came up]

LC: [Joe Sabol] He came in as the associate Dean back in 1988, I think it was, when John

West, who was the associate dean when I came here, retired. That was kind of a big year. We changed farm managers; Dick Birquette became the farm manager, and John West retired, and I brought, Joe, and actually Larry Rathbun was involved as well. In 1988 he was the associate dean. He went down to Costa Rica to help start of College of Agriculture down there, and he was very much involved in that project.

MS: Did you go down there as well?

LC: I was involved in the beginning. That was one of the accomplishments that occurred during that 10 year period, rather significant, and that college has successfully, they're on their own, they do not receive any subsidies or funding from the United States Government anymore. That's a story all in its own. When you talk to Larry Rathbun, you'll have to talk about his involvement in that.

MS: What was it, he went down 53 times?

LC: Yes, he went down many times and was there the better part of two years, and that's when Joe Sabol came on as the associate dean.

MS: And that's when the dust hit the fan, huh?

LC: Well, yes. In 1988. So we had the Costa Rica project going, we had moved into the new building, it was new at that time...

MS: Building 10? [later corrected to building 11]

LC: Building 10. We had done the planning and that building occurred during the time I was there.

CI: So, was building 10, when was that built? The 1980s? [later corrected to building 11]

LC: It finished in 1988. That's when we moved in. It was supposed to be done the year before, but the contractor, somehow the roof materials had done some mismeasurments

or something was wrong, because the materials didn't fit. So they had to reorder the steel beams for the roof. That set them back almost a year, but they kept building the lower part, and actually put the sheet rock on and everything, and in October, about the 28th or something, we had a 2-3 inch rain and they had to take all that down and replace it because the rain, which set them back further. So, instead of moving in in 1987, which was planned, we moved in a year later in 1988.

CI: Is this the Alan Erhart building or the Ag Sciences building.

LC: The Ag Sciences building.

CI: The new Ag Sciences building, okay. [Building 11, not building 10]

LC: The Erhart building was the one that was here when I came, and had been here since the fifties, I think. 1954, or something like that. If you look on the corner, there is a block that gives the date.

MS: Can you tell us anything about how buildings became named or dedications were made?

LC: Well, there weren't many building names that I know of, except the agricultural sciences for building 10 [building 11]. The Erhart building, it is my understanding that he had been a Senator, and they named it after him, long before I got here, so I don't have all the details.

MS: That's okay, it's more than we've gotten so far.

CI: Kinda going of the naming of the buildings, what can you tell me about Jim Brock?

LC: Jim Brock was a benefactor for the College of Agriculture. He set up an endowment that was to be used to do a better job of telling agriculture's story to the public, and that endowment has allowed us to start the Brock Agricultural Communications Center, and

its... Scott Vernon has been instrumental in that. There have been others that have made contributions in making it succeed but... Mr. Brock had land holdings which became very valuable and he set up this, I think it was a million and a half dollar endowment and then a woman by the name of Parks also got interested in this project and added another significant component to that endowment and that has helped considerably. That was one of the larger gifts that occurred during my tenure. Another one that I worked on rather diligently during that ten year period was with Al Smith. He leased this 3200 acre ranch, it's called Swanton Pacific Ranch to Cal Poly for a dollar a year, and he worked with the students who went up there to do their internships or whatever, sometimes they'd go up there for a whole quarter and get experience and just after I took the assignment in Washington, D.C., he died and that's when this big endowment and gift of 3200 acre ranch with 2 miles of ocean front to Cal Poly for education purposes. It cannot be subdivided, I think he put some provisions in there that if it was not continued as a part of the University's education effort, it would revert back to the Boy Scouts. He was very active in the Boy Scouts, there was a Boy Scout camp on the grounds, may still be, but I don't think it's used for the Boy Scouts.

CI: I think it's used for the students when they're up there for the weekend.

MS: About when did that, the land become...

LC: I think upon his death it became part of the university...

MS: And you were dean at that time?

LC: I had just stepped out, I came back for the funeral. And, he was a really significant supporter of the College and Cal Poly in general, a very interesting...

CI: He wasn't a Cal Poly student was he?

LC: He had graduated in ag education and taught, and I think he taught at Camel, which is next to San Jose, and his family had started a co-op, and they built that co-op up and had added stored here and there and then it was sold to the WR Grace Company and when I arrived on the scene, this was before I got there, he set up a 1000 shares of WR Grace stock to be the, income from this was to be at the Dean's discretion to enhance the programs in the College of Agriculture. That was one of the first gifts that came from Al. Of course, that endowment was very small to what he finally provided to the University and the College of Agriculture."

36:49-39:00

CI: "So all these facilities, they really facilitate Learn by Doing. Why do you think Learn by Doing is so important to the students?"

LC: "It's an education philosophy that I have long... it's one reason why I thought this would be a wonderful place to come and work, because of that emphasis. And my involvement, clear back to when I was in FFA in high school was kind of oriented in that direction of learn by doing because that is kind of typical of what happened in the high school education programs and still does. Pretty much project oriented. One of the things we learned, that I learned in high school FFA, as an officer, we would go each year in the summer on a retreat and we would plan how the next year's activities, who was going to do what, and so forth. That has now developed into something people call strategic planning, but we didn't call it that back then, that was just the way it was done. So it's a philosophy of, yes you learn what's in the textbooks, you learn the principles and concepts, but until you can apply them to real life situations you really don't get it. It's a matter of taking those principles and concepts, putting them to use to benefit man in some

way, humankind in some way.”

Interview with Mr. Bob Cummings

Following are passages from an interview with Mr. Bob Cummings, current lecturer in the Cal Poly Agricultural Education and Communication department and agricultural business alumnus, that share specific information about the history of Cal Poly. The interview took place on January 30, 2012 in the Cal Poly office of Mr. Cummings. The interview was tape-recorded and a digital version is available.

Carrie Isaacson (CI): “When you were a student here, what was the makeup of students? Were more students ag business?”

Bob Cummings (BC): “Well that’s tough because we didn’t have the variety of majors we have now. Animal husbandry, Ag businesses, and BRAE or ag engineering, those were about the only three, oh and you had poultry, they were all separated. So that was a lot.”

3:20-4:40

CI: Was learn by doing as heavily stressed when you were a student as it is now?

BC: The word didn’t come up as often as it does now, it was just part of the curriculum.

CI: It was just the way things were?

BC: It was just the way things were. You had a lecture class, you had a four unit class you had three hours of classroom and three hours of lab, and that was pretty much every animal science class, every crops class, even a lot of the ag bus. Classes, we had labs that corresponded with those. It was just an automatic thing.

CI: When you were a student could you see how valuable that was and how different that was than other universities?

BC: Yes. Automatically. That's what made Cal Poly so famous. That's why the alumni from my era still think so highly of Cal Poly. And we still do. I think there's just not as much hands on classes as there was when I was a student here.

16:10-18:35

CI: What were some of the accomplishments Cal Poly achieved while you were here, like national awards or any great breakthrough in technology or a new piece of equipment..."

BC: You have to understand, we probably would have given our big pinkie to have one of those [calculator]. There was no calculators, no computers, no cell phones [...] We had very old, old tractors. We didn't have anything that compared to what we have today.

This building [Alan Erhart] was fairly new. Ag mechanics probably had the newest equipment. If you'd seen the old poultry unit...collected eggs by hand, that's the way it was. [...] We didn't have any of that. [...] You have to understand, this wasn't a very big school then. About 4500, mostly boys, all men.

18:36-

CI: Was there respect in the state for Cal Poly?

BC: Always. The College of Ag, there was Davis and Fresno and Chico and Cal Poly Pomona.

CI: Do you think the College of Ag presence was big on campus itself?

BC: Yes. Yes. Very much so.

CI: Was there also respect along with that presence, or maybe more like it is now, where there's just a lack of understanding?

BC: They knew who we were when we went to livestock judging contests, now we weren't as strong as Texas A&M or Oklahoma State or Iowa State or anything like that, we were one of the first judging teams to get close to the Top 10 at nationals, we were

11th. That was the closest any California team had come. Now, on the west coast, we were very strong, but once you crosses the Rockies...But then they brought different coaches out here and Cal Poly became a powerhouse. Cal Poly, once we had graduates that came back from other universities and backgrounds we were...Cal Poly has always been well known. I mean, Davis, that was a different group of people.

CI: Today on campus it feels like the other Colleges, the colleges on campus, liberal arts and business, they think what we're doing is kind of funny or they don't understand...that's putting it nicely. Do you think that disconnect has always been here on campus or has that come about in the last couple decades?

BC: I don't know when it happened [...] When you say you're a polytechnic university, you're hands on. It is hard because most people are from urban areas. [...]

32:47

BC: "The whole university was a family. McPhee made sure we were a family."

35:00 [poly royal]

BC: It wasn't Open House. It was competitions, it was all the clubs, during the daytime you had the food booths. Every unit had some kind of judging, there was hogs, beef, sheep, dairy, showmanships, that kind of thing going on at all times. Every department had a booth or display and they were judged.

Interview with Dr. Joseph Sabol

Following are passages from an interview with Dr. Joseph Sabol, a retired department head from the Agricultural Education and Communication department and former Interim Dean of the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences. The interview took place on March 3, 2012 at the home of Dr. Sabol. The interview was tape-recorded and video recorded. Digital versions of both are available.

Carrie Isaacson (CI): When did you first start at Cal Poly?

Jospeh Sabol (JS): 1972

1:41

CI: And what year did you retire?

JS: '02. 2002. So I was there thirty years. Never got caught once.

1:55-4:39

CI: When you started in 1972 was Learn by Doing more or less stressed?

JS: Oh my. That's a pretty hard question right away. Who gave you that question? I think the word stressed bothers me a little bit.

CI: Okay, focused on.

JS: We were more focused on Learn by Doing then because we had a little money then, and almost every class had a lab, almost every production class had a lab. Because it's expensive to have labs, and even though there was never any money, per say, labs were more common. Now, some classes don't have labs. It's sad.

CI: And when you retired, were you starting to see the decline of the labs?

JS: Yeah, it was ongoing, it was quiet. It just happened. There was no big directive that came down from the sky that said, 'okay, ten percent a year for the next ten years and then we'll be rid of these stupid labs.' Nobody did that. It was just very quiet.

CI: Do you believe that students back in 1972 were more prepared for the work force when they graduated?

JS: Oh my, these are hard questions.

CI: It's what I'm wondering.

JS: That's a very good question. It's hard to measure. You know, I don't know actually. I think our little department, in AgEd, there's no change. We still place everybody at the

same kind of rate, so there was really not much change. I think the thing that has changed over the students is, we have a lot of advisory committees. Every department is supposed to have an advisory committee that keeps them moving towards excellence (made that word up). So if a department, back in 72 was doing a good job, they continued to do a good job. I don't think there is a department in the College of Ag that didn't really work hard to get students placed, successfully. Because that's what will make you famous. You get famous because your students are good, not because you write a book. Your students get successfully, you get successful, so you're really put your reputation on people when you teach a lab, or a class or have a program.

4:39-7:15

CI: When you were Dean, did you get a chance to work with any other educators from the other colleges on campus?

JS: Oh yes, I think that was my favorite part. You got to find out what the other associate deans had problems or were fighting other administrators or whatever. But the short answer is yes. The long answer is I wish we could have done more. I think we could have ganged up on... the engineers, architects and business people all have something in common with us. They all work very hard to get their students placed to do what they do. So we should have held hands more often, as colleges, so that other colleges who are support colleges didn't get their way. You have to be very careful there because the college of liberal arts wanted to have a music major. Well, what does a music major do? So we should have worked harder to maintain the engineering, architecture, agriculture, business so that we really kept the labs to us, instead of buying pianos. We didn't do that. We were too independent, stubborn, whatever. We didn't do enough of that as a real polytechnic school. When I became associate dean I was real disappointed we didn't hold

on to each other more and vote together more, and...always. Not just there but with the students. I'll give you an example, we had two students run for student body president, who were both in the college of agriculture, and they ran against each other for student body president. What a stupid thing to do, as a student. We really shouldn't be fighting each other for votes. Once agriculture and engineering holds hands, we can out vote everybody, because they would all be split. But it doesn't happen that way. I would like to see more polytechnic collaboration. I would like to see more collaboration between the polytechnic colleges that we have today.

7:50-8:35

CI: Kind of switching gears a little bit, what can you tell me about Jim Brock?

JS: Jim Brock, don't know the guy. But he must have been a good guy. What he did for the college of agriculture by giving us an endowment to start the Brock Center, it was brilliant. He was brilliant. We really needed communications. But I don't know him.

CI: Did you do any work with the Brock Center while you were at Cal Poly?

JS: No. Slapped them around a little bit. I wanted more from them.

12:49-13:49

CI: Has the quality of students coming in to the aged department and coming out stayed consistent or gotten better.

JS: I'm pretty sure they got better. Because I don't hear about the bad ones anymore, only the good ones. I've been gone for ten years and I go to the banquets and the parades and the... and there aren't any bad ones. But we used to have some challenges. Some student teachers didn't make it and some decided to go someplace else and I remember those very well because some people are hard to change. They want to be a teacher and we won't let them. So I remember all the bad ones from the old days. But now, Kellogg [Dr.

Bill Kellogg, current AgEd department head] doesn't tell me about the bad ones. He pretends like it's all fine. So I can't answer that one. But I think they're better. The good ones are better. The good ones are better than the good ones we had back in the old days.

29:57-30:52

CI: What scholarships, endowments or awards were the biggest that you remember during your time, that started?

JS: Well, probably the biggest endowment we ever got was from Swanton, a guy named Al Smith and he really liked us. He was an ag teacher once upon a time and he got run over by a train one time and lost his leg, he loved trains, he loved AgEd, he loved Learn by Doing, and he gave us his 3,200 acre ranch and millions of dollars to go with it. So, it's hard to top that. And he was a great guy too, a really great guy. Down to earth, funny, a little stubborn, a great guy.

32:45-34:35

CI: I want to know more about scholarships, like the George Soares award, that have names attached to them, but the students today have no idea who these people were and what they did for the school. Were there any that were very special when they were given to us [Cal Poly] or have any special meaning behind them?

JS: Oh, yeah, we could go to that Soares award. Soares was a Cal Poly guy, student body president, a super advisory council man, and very generous to Cal Poly. So when he gave an award to an outstanding student, or whatever it is, at the end of the year, there was only one of them, and he would be there to give it to them. So I like it when a person is still alive and he gives an award to an outstanding student and he comes to be there to give it to them face to face and ask them 'hey Megan, what are you doing next year?

Want to come to work for me?’ He gave a really good recognition to an outstanding student, one, and I really liked that. Probably a different kind of award was the Rassey award. We never met the guy. He was another one of those guys who ran around with crummy clothes on and gave us billions of dollars in scholarships. We used to give away dozens of those thousand dollar scholarships and then we increased it. Do you know what one costs, a Rassey scholarship? He was a very wealthy grape farmer that didn’t go to Cal Poly. He came over one day and saw Learn by Doing and said ‘let’s set up a scholarship for these people who work.’

35:13-37:20

JS: There was another endowment that I really liked, it was a loan program, the Nissen Loans. Do you know what a Nissen is? Well, it’s too bad because it is a great loan program. This guy, Nissen, a real person, he put a bunch of money at Cal Poly and said ‘loan this to students.’ So I was the loan officer for that Nissen Loan and I had a little committee, this is when I was associate dean. So students would apply for this loan and I would copy their application and mail it to him, because he liked to read them. He never came to the meetings, but he liked to read them. And one time we started buying computers and we found a student who wanted to buy a computer, that’s why they were applying, and he called me up and said ‘don’t give her any money.’ And I said ‘well you have to have money to buy a computer.’ He says ‘no, it’s just games.’ That’s when it was pong and everything, nothing to do with college. And I told him ‘no, the teacher requires them to have a computer,’ he said, ‘okay, but no games.’ Oh I loved this guy, because he didn’t want you playing around with his money. He didn’t want scholarships, he never gave a single scholarship to anybody, because that’s a gift, that’s free money, he wanted you to work for it. He wanted you to pay him back. So we interviewed every

student that got a Nissen loan face to face and we'd call him that night and go through it because he wanted to know how much money we were giving. One time we had a student who wanted money so she wouldn't have to work so hard, so she could ride her horse, and he said 'No, no money to her.' And I said, 'now look, she's enrolled in a colt breaking class, she had to ride her horse,' and he said 'oh, okay.' That's the kind of people I got to work with, hardworking people who made a great wealth on hard work and they wanted the same out of you.

45:20-50:15

CI: Okay, we're going to get into another heavy subject. What does Learn by Doing mean to you?

JS: There's a long answer. Learn by Doing means to me that the students learn best by doing. Not all students, even brilliant students, can learn by watching. I've watched a lot of golf and I can tell you all the principles and memorize it and take a test on golfing, but if you ask me to hit one, without a little practice, I can't hit it very well. Same thing with swimming, or jumping the high bar, you learn best by doing. And Learn by Doing takes a little time, and not everybody learns at the same speed. So that's why the three hour lab. It takes hours to get people to Learn by Doing, because we learn at different speeds. So Learn by Doing really punches it home and makes it permanent. When they practice, not just once, but they practice over and over again, they begin to get it, and then they ask questions. Questions don't always come in the beginning and when you're giving a lecture, the best thing to do is not ask questions. But when you're doing it, you better ask questions or you're going to get hurt. So I think learn by doing causes the brains and the hands and the hearts to go to work, all at the same time. So it is really comprehensive learning and what the person is doing and thinking at the same time. So a Learn by Doing

teacher, then, better be prepared for tough questions, while we're practicing. Better be prepared and be prepared for smaller classes. When Dr. McPhee, Julian McPhee built Cal Poly he made classrooms small, he made them out of concrete so you couldn't push them down and make big labs, big hallways. So if he knew how many large classrooms we have today at Cal Poly, he'd say 'uuhhhh no.'" Because look at the classrooms in Building 10, they're small. Some of them have fifty chairs, fifty, and that was big for him. He didn't want big rooms, he wanted room for thirty, thirty-five, forty, so one teacher could see people in the back of the room. So Learn by Doing means small classes, it means laboratories, it means facilities. It is very expensive to Learn by Doing. It's not efficient, it's effective. It's not efficient to have Learn by Doing because to make people learn to tie a knot, oh it could take hours. Some people learn quickly, some people don't, and so it is not very efficient to teach knot tying Learn by Doing, but it sure is effective. So you need small classes, you need money and you need facilities. That's why we have the school farm. That's why we are more expensive than Long Beach State or Cal State Sacramento or wherever. Because we have so many engineers learning to build bridges in their labs, and the architects same thing. They have to do those drawings all night long, learn to draw their alphabet, straight up and down. That's called Learn by Doing. Now, do you want to hear the negative side? Learn by Doing has become a way to raise money from alumni. All you have to say is "ah we got to keep Learn by Doing, give me money.'" Well that's not what it's about, that's secondary. Learn by Doing is a catchy title to get people to open up their wallet. But there is nobody at Cal Poly who teaches Learn by Doing to our faculty, our department heads, our deans. Who teaches new faculty members, when they come onto campus, about Learn by Doing? Nobody. So these young

faculty come in and say ‘oh, let’s have a big classroom. I’ll take fifty, I’ll take one hundred.’ And then they go home at night, they never go Saturday’s and they drop internships just like that. Internships are wonderful things to have, but they kill faculty. They only have one intern and you got to go all the way to watch them do what they’re doing. It’s very expensive. So these departments very slowly, very quietly say don’t need an internship, they can see a slide show. And it goes away, and that bothers me, as an old guy.

1:01.05-1:03

JS: Do you have any other questions about Poly Royal you’d like to ask me?

CI: I could ask you a hundred questions about Poly Royal, but, can you tell me about the year when it all ended?

JS: Yeah, I could.

CI: Would you like to?

JS: No, I’d rather talk about the year it took off again.

CI: Okay. Yes, that’s good.

JS: It was a bad experience and Dr. Baker had to do something, so he closed it down, and then we went to him, we, Joe Sabol and Lark Carter, and said to him ‘Let us do something special, that won’t let anyone know we’re going to have a Poly Royal. We want to have an Open House.’ We can have all our friends in agriculture come, and all the incoming students for agriculture for the next year, and all the teachers and the parents and we’ll have an ag open house and we’ll call it ‘AgriView.’ Baker says, ‘Oh, I don’t trust you guys, but go ahead.’ So we did it. We had an open house just for ag students, just for the College of Ag. You couldn’t have a big sale on selling hot dogs, but we cancelled school, we stopped school, and on Friday we had an open house and we had

thousands of people come. And they behaved themselves, they didn't get drunk and go downtown and break windows. It was very respectable. The next year, they asked us to show the other schools how to do it. So that's how Open House got created, we went and showed them what we did. SO the current Open House is a model of how to invite people to campus and not cancel classes and go get drunk Thursday night. And so that's the beginning of Open House. It was all because agriculture students knew how to behave themselves.

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